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Ocean Recovery – Time For A Reset?



Global ocean heat content, 1940-2019

Source: Carbon Brief, updated based on Cheng et al, Advances In Atmospheric Sciences, 2020

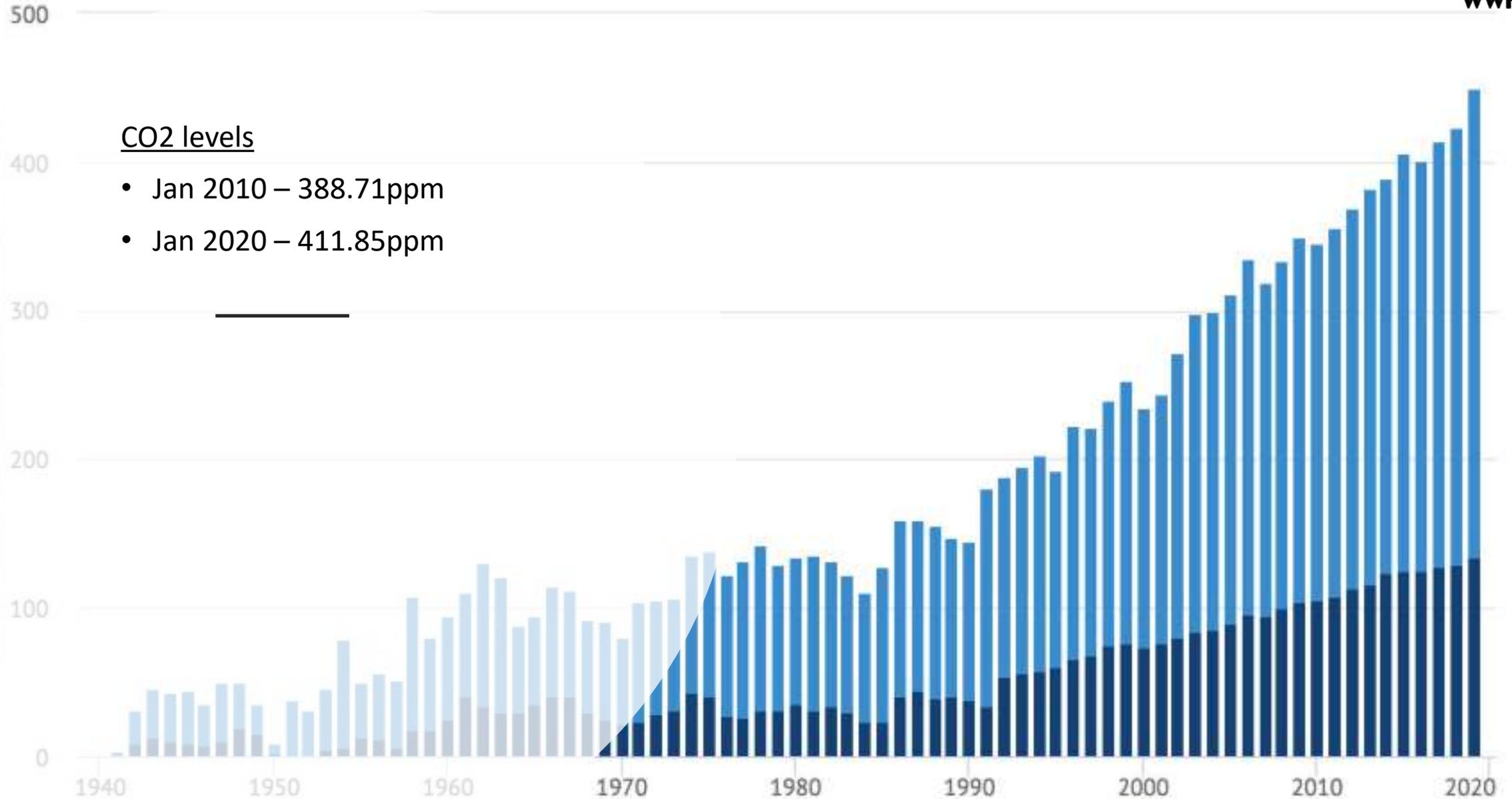


● 0-700m ● 700-2000m

Zettajoules (billion trillion joules) warming since 1940

CO2 levels

- Jan 2010 – 388.71ppm
- Jan 2020 – 411.85ppm



The ocean is a quiet hero, at its own expense and despite our direct impacts

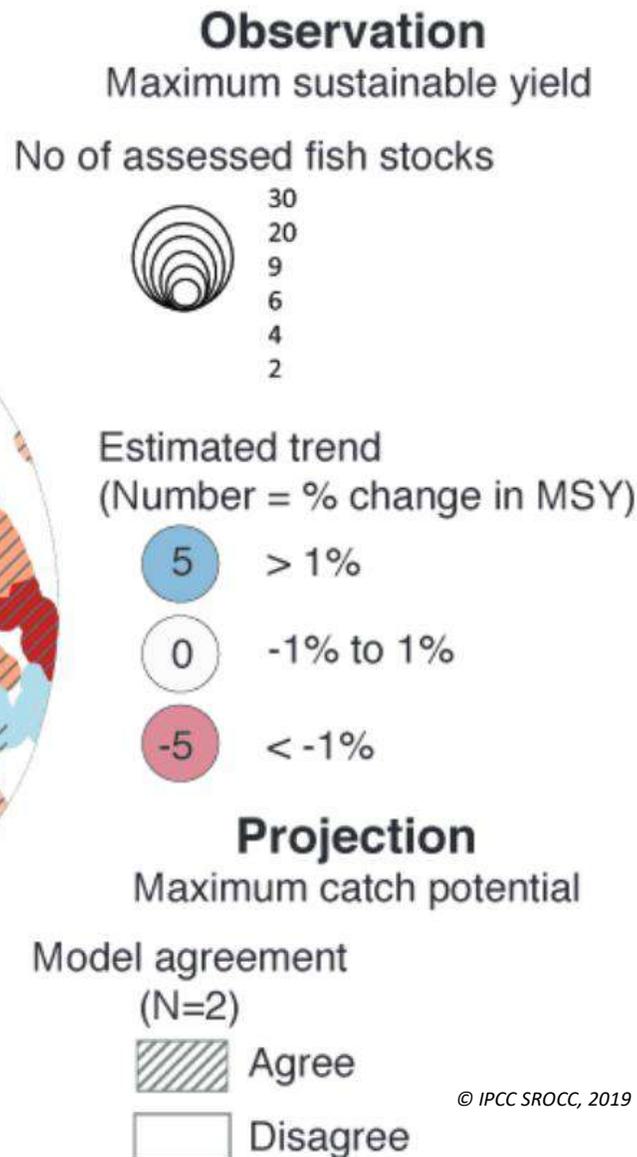
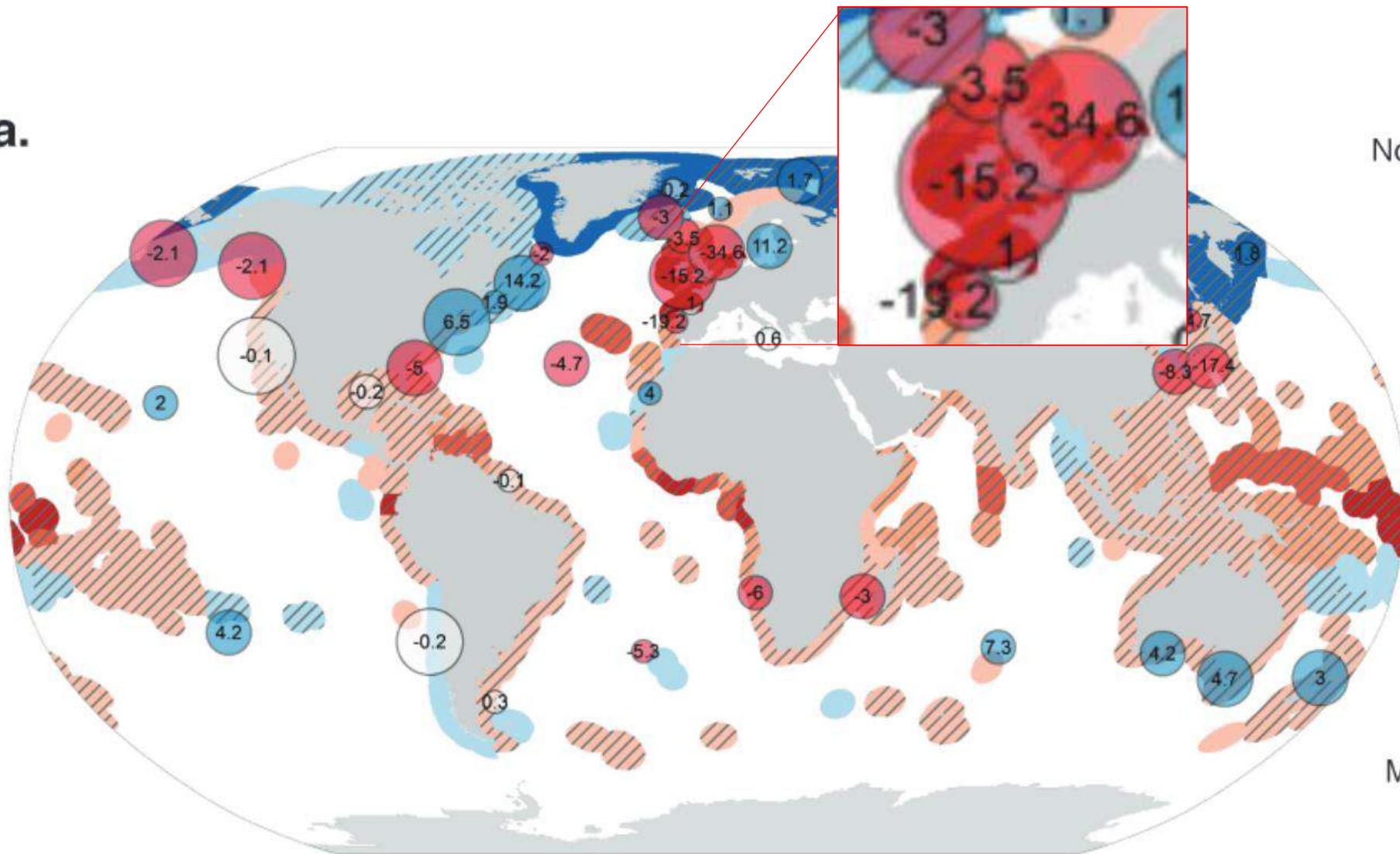
- Southern Ocean world's largest carbon sink (Witman, 2018) (Fourqurean et al, 2012)
- Ocean has absorbed 20-30% CO₂ and up to 93% % heat (IPCC, Cheng et al., 2017)
- Ocean heating rate since 1990 equivalent to 3-6 Hiroshima bombs/second (Zanna et al. 2019)
- Seagrass 10% of global ocean carbon burial despite 0.2% area
- Without ocean, world would be 36°C hotter than pre-industrial levels, not 1°C (Grantham Institute, 2015)
- Over 1/3 heat absorbed below 700m 1993-2017 (SROCC, 2019)
- 1756m tonnes carbon stored in Scottish seabed sediments (SNH, 2018)

- 90% seagrass in UK lost, 92% in Denmark, 60% Sweden... (Gubbay, 2015)
- 50% coastal wetlands lost in last 50 years worldwide (IPCC SROCC, 2019)
- Only 7% global fish stocks fished within safe limits (FAO, 2018; IPBES, 2019)
- 50% Great Barrier Reef corals bleached in 2016/17, leading to 89% decline in new corals (Hughes et al., 2019)
- 4 of 11 indicators of UK seas in 'good' status (Cefas et al, 2019)
- 300-400mill tonnes pollution per year (IPBES, 2019), incl 8 million tonnes plastic
- >400 dead zones, greater than UK size (IPBES, 2019)
- Southern ocean up to 62% total world heat gain 2005-17 (IPCC SROCC, 2019)

Change to MSY/Max fish potential by 2050 under RCP2.6



a.



Policy Context – the time is



UK seas in
crisis

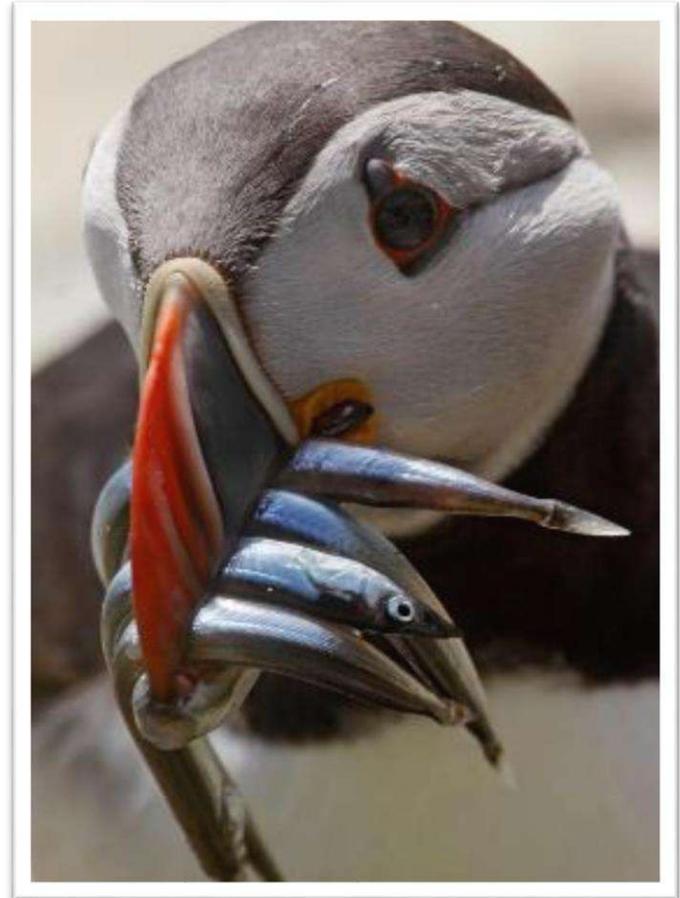
UK as
Independent
Coastal State

UK as
financial
centre

Nature and
climate
emergencies

UK as global
oceans leader

2020
Superyear



FROM MANAGING DECLINE TO DRIVING RECOVERY

- The ocean can be the hero but must be allowed to be so!
- Everything will change – we must change too
- Tweaking business as usual is not an option. Transformational change is needed, fast, with recovery at its heart
- Climate is a golden thread that fundamentally affects and integrates everything, including MPAs & fisheries management
- Ocean recovery is a political and societal choice and an opportunity for leadership





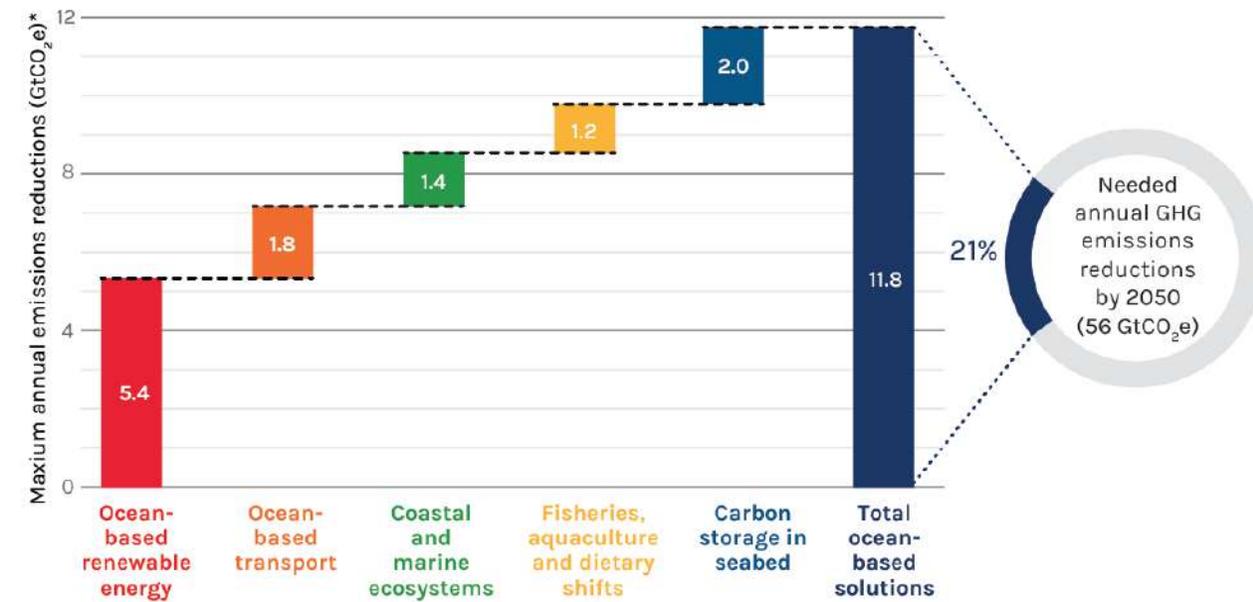
OCEAN RECOVERY - KEY THEMES

1. URGENCY and AMBITION
2. LEADERSHIP and CREDIBILITY
3. INTEGRATION
4. DYNAMISM
5. HOPE 

ocean recovery is nature recovery is climate



ONE WHALE HAS THE CARBON ABSORBING CAPACITY OF THOUSANDS OF TREES



Notes: * To stay under a 1.5°C change relative to pre-industrial levels

Source: Authors



Concluding thoughts

- The time is NOW. A radical rethink of ocean policy is due in the light of the urgency and ambition needed.
- Does our legislation drive recovery, or is it just lack of implementation?
- Silos and quest for detail are missing the bigger picture
- Ocean recovery is a message of hope - an opportunity for leadership and to showcase UK seas in positive way
- We have solutions and knowledge – we need to act!
- **By end of 2020: a world-leading UK ocean recovery programme announced at COP26?**



10 years to
save the
ocean (and
save
ourselves?)